



Case Study

Using learning pathways to launch a blended leadership programme at RSPCA

Pam Pappenheim shares her approach to using learning pathways to create a leadership programme at RSPCA, using eLearning and video learning as part of a blend.

- The programme was launched using the new learning pathways feature within the Moodle LMS provided by the Charity Learning Consortium
- Saw an 80% reduction in cost and huge time savings for RSPCA
- Was successfully rolled out during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Includes supportive pre-work and reflective learning with a digital workbook
- Manager conversations were the only part delivered face to face making this course incredibly innovative

Designing the new Lead First programme

Pam Pappenheim, IT Digital Learning Consultant at the RSPCA, explains the blended approach used to create a new Lead First programme, to replace a five-day, face to face management training course. The previous course had been delivered off-site by external providers and training and accommodation was expensive. It was logistically challenging for the learning and development (L&D) team to organise and meant five to six days out of the office for the participants. It also didn't meet the needs of learning in the flow of work, which can be particularly useful for leaders and managers. A new approach was needed and the pandemic became the catalyst for a new blended approach.

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Without the pandemic, it would really have been difficult for the team to make a case for online delivery, however inconvenient it was, people were used to going away for five days and enjoying time out of the office. Now it is so much simpler to be able to deliver the sessions online and make use of webinar features like breakout rooms for group discussions.

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There were three main areas of focus in the new blended programme: leading myself, leading others and leading teams.

Kerry Gabriel from the L&D team created six modules to meet these needs:

1. Leading Myself

An introduction to RSPCA's values, desired leadership behaviours and leadership styles.

2. Meaningful Conversations

How to have courageous conversations with purpose, give positive feedback and manage performance.

3. Leading Others

Delivered by the HR team, it includes disciplinary grievances, capability, sickness and absence topics, followed by reflective conversations with line managers and skills practice.

4. Developing Others

This module focuses on motivation: How to delegate and empower others to get the best results using coaching practices.

5. Leading Teams

Building trust and engagement, healthy conflict and managing change.

6. Managing Finance & Risk

Delivered by the finance department, this module covers risk management, health and safety, finance and budgeting.



Creating a blend

Pre-work was created, which gave the learner:

- A topic to think about
- Something to read online
- Something to watch

This was followed by a virtual session, delivered by in-house subject matter experts. The RSPCA uses the Charity Learning Consortium's [Clear Lessons video platform](#) to host its online webinars. Recordings are then posted onto course pages for people to watch and re-listen to. Post-work followed, to encourage self-reflection and practical application, with ongoing conversations with line managers.

Interactive workbooks

A digital workbook was created inhouse for each module in the programme, which includes lots of information specific to the RSPCA. This approach gave learners autonomy, so they could progress independently and get as much value out of the modules as possible.

The workbooks included:

- Areas to record reflections
- RSPCA case studies and scenarios
- Thought-provoking questions
- External links to further information

The structure and format of all of the modules are similar, so that once participants complete the first one they know what to expect.

Pilot and refinement

Timeline for launch

2019	Mar 2020	Jan 2021	April 2021	May 2021	Jun/July 2021	Sep 2021
First Discussions	Lockdown Start Planning	Start Preparation	Pilot Launch 16 participants	Learning Path Discussions	Comms-video Prog Launch on LP	LF virtual modules Takeaways

The L&D team created a pilot group of 16 people from throughout RSPCA, so they could test and refine the programme. This gave invaluable feedback, to re-evaluate the programme and make any changes before launch in September 2021. The team came up with an estimate of how long each virtual session would take and the timings were amended after the pilot. For example, the Managing Others module was increased from a half day to a full day virtual delivery because of the interest and huge engagement on the topic.

Staff at RSPCA are generally confident using Google technologies, like Google Meet, Drive and Docs for sharing. But the biggest challenge was ensuring that people had hardware and bandwidth to be able to do everything that was required at home. This was met by investing in new technology, a necessary cost to ensuring inclusion.

Launching the programme

The L&D team created a five minute video to launch the programme: “This was much more exciting than just an email with lots of reading involved.” says Pam.

The video explained the objectives and set out what participants could expect from the course:

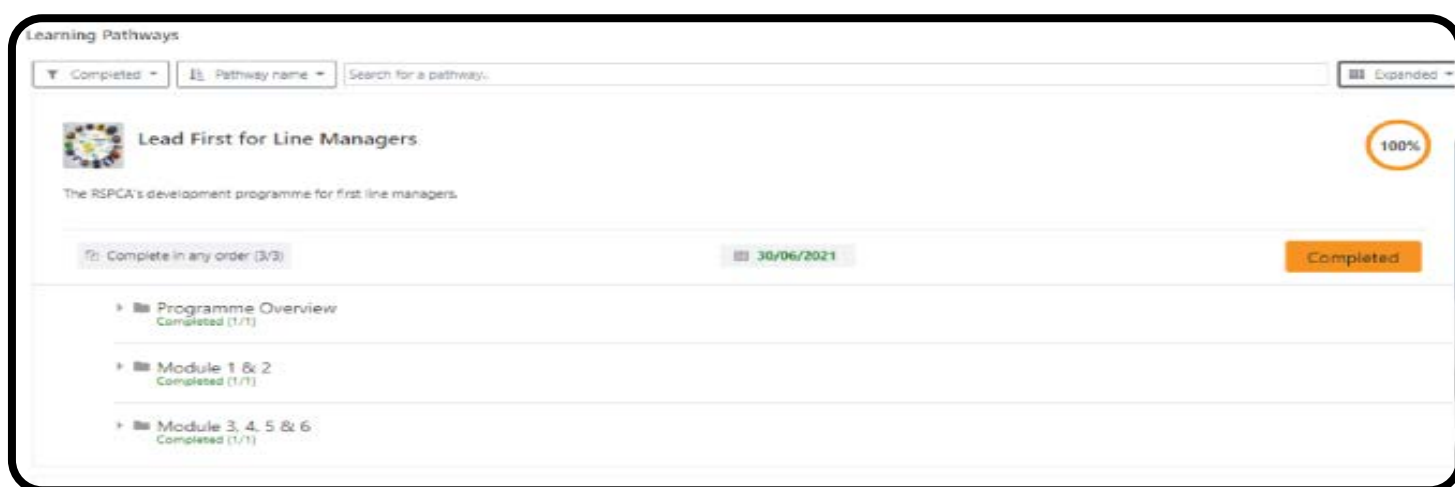
- Interaction with other peers
- Sharing of experiences and group work to learn together
- Relevant theory
- Practical models
- Reflection and self-evaluation skills
- The teams’ expectations of commitment and engagement
- Putting new skills into practice
- Providing feedback about their experience of the programme

“Once you launch a programme, it’s not really time to put up your feet,” explains Pam. “You need to get your feedback, measure success, evaluate the content.”

Initial feedback, which has featured in the RSPCA newsletter, has been resoundingly positive. Delegates felt that it was very professionally put together and delivered with huge enthusiasm.

Using learning pathways

Kerry Gabriel, RSPCA's Learning and Development Manager, was looking for a way to roll out the new Lead First programme in a timely manner, which would also make the tracking progress easy. As luck would have it, the Charity Learning Consortium had just launched and demonstrated the new learning pathways feature in the Moodle learning management system it provides. It was the perfect opportunity to try it out!



This functionality means that courses and modules can be grouped into a pathway, signposting people along a journey through a learning programme. The RSPCA highlighted this feature, moving it to a prominent position at the top of the LMS, so learners can instantly see the pathway assigned to them.

Because it was the first time the team were using this tool they kept things simple. The pathway involved them completing the first two modules in order, then booking onto a virtual session. After that, they can do any module in any order they like. The aim is for participants to complete the programme within 12 months.

Learner progress can be checked really quickly. "Learning pathways gives you a bird's-eye view as to what's going on," says Pam "And it's easy to run a report too. Just choose the learning pathways reporting option."

Pam's hints and tips for using learning pathways

Being able to report on a group of courses is powerful

We've gained confidence using the learning pathways feature and have gone on to implement learning pathways for an induction course that is far more complex than the Lead First programme. Being able to report on a group of courses, rather than each individually, has been a very powerful feature of learning pathways. It decreases the number of reports that need to be run and allows us to create a clear list of learning for users to complete in an easy to create format.

Maintain learner engagement with bespoke reminders

Using learning pathways means you check to see where people are, what they have started and what they still need to do. This is great for sending bespoke reminders to learners to keep up engagement and momentum.

Amending a learning pathway is easy

Changing a learning pathway is really simple. You can add and take away courses within the pathway to improve your programme, so you can keep refining after you've launched.

What's included in the Leading Myself module:

Video: What makes a leader?

Live virtual session

Leadership styles questionnaire

Interactive digital workbook

Insights evaluator tool, for leaders to understand their behaviour based on colour models

Leadership feedback template

Evaluation form and survey

Community forum

Pam's top tips for creating a blended leadership programme

Pilot programmes and ongoing reviews are vital

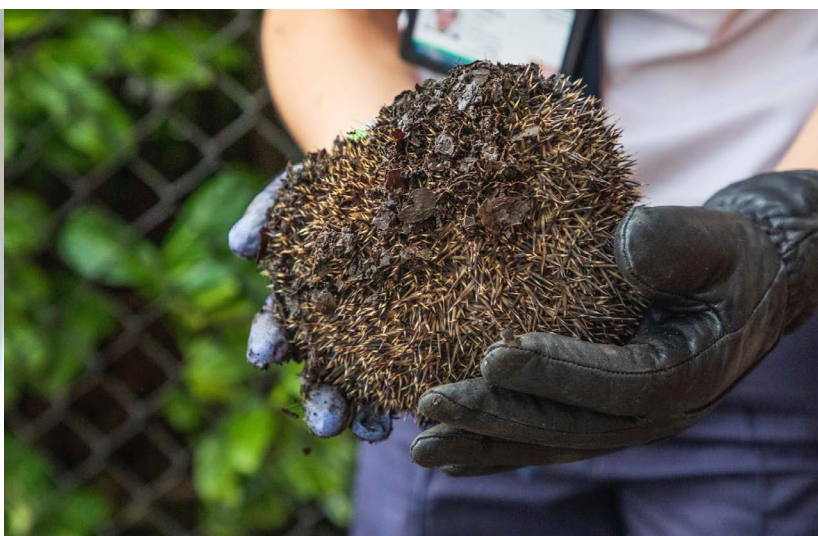
The programme is based on a 12-month guideline and the team will be closely monitoring progress of participants to see how this works in practice. We're currently analysing feedback and reports, and will make further adjustments as required.

You don't need a big budget to create a professional leadership programme

The RSPCA has seen an approximate 80% reduction in cost and huge time savings from creating a bespoke, in-house learning programme. Because it was delivered and developed in-house, it cost about 20% of the original face to face programme. It also saves time away from desks. But it is still being delivered at a very high and professional standard.

Collaboration counts

Staff at the Charity Learning Consortium gave invaluable support and guidance on using learning pathways. And if you want to create resources, it's a great time to become friendly with your communications team!



Pam Pappenheim

Pam Pappenheim is the Digital Learning Consultant at the RSPCA